

It's a bit odd for me as a healthy 30-something-year-old to be writing about death. But having lived through the protracted agony of my mother's death from kidney failure and complications from dialysis, I feel I have some authority on the subject. Paradoxically, it is because medical science has advanced so far that the terminally ill die ever more slowly and painfully. I have seen again and again a dying person being kept alive indefinitely by whatever means necessary—feeding tubes, ventilators, and so forth. Even when there is no hope of recovery, we forcibly keep them alive until they have no shred of human dignity left—until they are reduced to little more than a living corpse. It's high time that we as a society think about end-of-life care for loved ones who are terminally ill, and consider the ethical issues involved.

By terminally ill, I mean patients who have been suffering for a long time, who have no chance of improvement, who have no quality of life, and are merely 'living' without really being alive in body, mind, or spirit. It's understandable and natural for family members to try their utmost to keep the person alive for a few more days or weeks or months. But think about it from the perspective of the dying person. Are we not making them suffer longer? Isn't it almost cruel to subject them to the indignity of feeding tubes, catheters, adult diapers, needles, injections, and defibrillators? Even worse, we are inflicting this cruelty to someone in their most vulnerable state—totally helpless, in pain, and no longer able speak for themselves to refuse our interventions. Isn't it almost cruel?

It would actually be *kind* to let them die in peace, with just fluids, oxygen, and painkillers to minimise the pain as much as possible. In fact, when we forcibly keep them alive, we're doing it for selfish reasons. We're doing it not for *their* sake, but for *our* sake, because *we* can't bear the loss, and *we* can't let go. From the dying person's point of view,

the most kind and loving thing we can do is to ease their suffering, make them as comfortable as possible, and let them go when it's time. In developed countries, it is common for elderly people to discuss end-of-life issues with their family members so that, when the time comes, their caregivers will know what they would have wished. They may also designate a healthcare proxy who will make the final decisions in accordance with their wishes. Having these conversations

DEATH WITH DIGNITY CARING FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

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ahead of time can help us avoid the wrenching uncertainty of not knowing what to do. For instance, if the person does not want to be on life support, we should honor that wish. After all, it's their last wish, the last thing they ask of us. We should respect and honor that. We should allow them to die with dignity.

It is also common, in developed countries, for the terminally ill person to be taken out of the hospital and placed in hospice care. A hospice is not a hospital—it does not provide treatment. Instead, the focus is on making the dying person's last days or weeks as comfortable and pain-free as possible.

and travel. They talk about what they can do since the *dalal* is no longer picking up their calls and their worry about the money and passports they've handed in. After she hangs up, Runa calls the *dalal* yet again. He does not pick up. They have good reason to worry. 19 percent of migrants are cheated and prevented from going abroad even after making partial or full payment of migration costs, according to the annual migration trends report 2017 by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU). A certain number of returnees do remigrate, as Runa is planning to, despite the high cost of migration. The 2017 IOM study, conducted among both potential migrants and returnees, found



ILLUSTRATION: MANAN MORSHED

Family members may continue to visit every day, but with an acceptance of death, allowing nature to take its course. We may not have hospice care available in Bangladesh, but we do have the ability to make informed decisions about what is in the best interests of the dying person.

What I'm suggesting may seem cruel or heartless. One might object, "How can we just watch someone die?" But if the person is already at death's door, you can't stop them from dying. The most you can do is force them to live a few

more days or weeks. You would still be watching them die, except it would be slower, longer, and more painful—for them and for everyone else. Is that really what you want to do? Or is it kinder and more ethical to let them die with dignity? That's the choice we have to make, and if we choose poorly, we have to live with the haunting consequences.

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that the average cost per migrant of going to Europe was Tk 7,47,088 (USD 8800)—more than twice that of migrating to the Middle East. Even if their papers come through, Runa has to pay one lakh taka more once her visa is confirmed. So far, she is committed to giving three lakh taka, money which she does not have. Why, with the high cost of migration, does she still insist on going abroad? Runa replies, "Is it possible for me to cook in people's homes, cut grass, or feed cows now? I can't work here, I've become used to work abroad. I can't physically handle the work here." Unlike Runa, however, Raziya hasn't yet gotten the call from IOM about a cash grant. Finding herself a burden in her

sister's household once again, Raziya decided to marry the aging Hossain. The wedding took place only a couple of months ago, much to the displeasure of both Raziya's daughter and Hossain's grown children. "I had no home, this household is only a few days old, this too is not secure." Just as Raziya hoped to secure her future by marrying again, Runa has taken steps to ensure her own. At present, with Europe seeming yet uncertain, Runa has already started thinking of Dubai as the next option. If this *dalal* doesn't follow through and as soon as their papers are returned, Runa along with her friend will submit their papers to a company in Dubai. But remigrate, she will. ■

| MUSINGS |

As our taxi wound its way down the wide avenues of Santiago, our driver, despite his rudimentary English, regaled us with his vacation stories. "Viña Del Mar! Very good! Nice beach! Nice food! I go on weekend," he announced excitedly, as he fumbled through his pockets while stopped at a red light. As the light turned green, he sped off, one hand on the steering wheel, the other scrolling through photos on his phone. He seemed not to notice my gasp of alarm as he turned towards us in the backseat to flash his phone. "See? So nice!" he exclaimed, as he kept scrolling through photos of himself squinting up at the sun, the cobalt waters of the Pacific stretching out behind him.

Perhaps it was because we questioned the sanity of a man who would happily

Garden city
Travel brochures advertise it as *Ciudad Jardín* (Garden City). And indeed it appeared to be so. We hadn't even gone a few paces and we stumbled upon the magnificently manicured Parque Quinta Vergara. Within seconds of stepping through the gates, I was overcome by a sense of tranquillity. Elderly couples strolled along the gravel path. Teams of gardeners tended to the plants under the weak, winter sun. Despite all the activity, it still felt peaceful. Even the lawnmower sounded muted amidst the chorus of birdsong. I wonder if I would've viewed it differently had I not come from the bedlam that is Valpo. The city also plays host to a number of other lush parklands and botanical gardens. Tourists flock to take selfies with the *Reloj de Flores* (Flower Clock) at



SAMAI HAIDER

THE VINEYARD BY THE SEA

go through his phone while changing lanes on a freeway, but we took his recommendation with a pinch of salt. However, it appeared that every guide book and traveller to Chile corroborated his opinion. Viña Del Mar or "Vineyard by the Sea" is only a 25 minute train ride up the coast from Valparaíso—an easy day trip. It is a popular weekend haunt for Santiaguinos. Emerging from the train station, I was in for a shock. Wide boulevards stretched out in all directions, bordered by neat rows of palm trees. The plaza we'd stepped onto was pristine and well-kept. The air smelt fresh. It was a far cry from the chaos of Valparaíso. Viña did not have any major tourist attractions to draw us there. But it did offer us a welcome opportunity for a bit of simple relaxation.

the foot of Cerro Castillo. It's a working clock, made entirely of flowers, identical to the *L'horloge fleurie* in Geneva. Perhaps if I appreciated flowers more I would've cherished the visit instead of watching the tourists with their selfie sticks in mild bemusement. My toddler, however, revelled in the discovery of an actual playground and play equipment that wasn't in ruins. As a fine connoisseur of slides and open parkland, he was in heaven. **Castles by the sea**
Walking down the promenade I was greeted with a modest-sized castle, jutting out from the rocks below. Castillo Wulff mimicked the architecture of the castles of Europe, but lacked the size and history. I was far more impressed by the giant albatrosses making a ruckus on the rocks.



Castillo Wulff



Cerro-Allegre



Flower Clock



Pastel de gaiba

Looming over Castillo Wulff, is Cerro Castillo, a hilly neighbourhood with pretty mansions and fantastic views. No wonder the President of Chile chooses to retire here in the summer! **Gastronomic delights**
It comes as no surprise that Viña Del Mar is renowned for excellent seafood. We'd done our research and the restaurant, Donde Willy came very highly recommended. A restaurant whose name literally translates to "Where's the Willy" doesn't quite scream gourmet dining, but it certainly lived up to the reviews. We finally had our first taste of Chile's famous *Pastel de Jaiba*, a rich, creamy crab casserole with a cheesy crust and *Machas*

à *La Parmesana*, baked clams with parmesan. An unlikely discovery, however, was a *f fuente de soda* called Cevasco. Chile's *f fuente de soda* are typically local fast food joints selling hotdogs and burgers. We were drawn to the mid-morning diners filing into the nondescript restaurant, and the size of the *vienesas* or hotdogs. They came loaded with mayo, cabbage and smashed avocado and were about a foot long. Next stop: HangaRoa, Easter Island! Samai Haider is a writer, traveller, artist and... economist. If her rather odd amalgamation of interests isn't dotty enough, she is currently travelling around South America—with her pack and toddler strapped to her back. Read about the fables of her foibles here at Star Weekend. You can see more of her work at: <http://samaihaider.com/>